

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICATION FOR LETTERS PATENT

* * * * *

Methods Of Forming A Reaction Product And Methods Of Forming
A Conductive Metal Silicide By Reaction Of Metal With Silicon

* * * * *

INVENTORS:

Gurtej S. Sandhu
Guy T. Blalock

ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NO. MI22-2268

METHODS OF FORMING A REACTION PRODUCT AND METHODS OF FORMING A CONDUCTIVE METAL SILICIDE BY REACTION OF METAL WITH SILICON

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] This invention relates to methods of forming a reaction product and to methods of forming a conductive metal silicide by reaction of metal with silicon.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Integrated circuits typically use various combinations of insulative materials, conductive materials, and semiconductive materials (including conductively doped semiconductive materials). One type of conductive material which is utilized is elemental metals. In the context of this document, an “elemental metal” is defined to mean any one or more metal element(s) in element form, including any alloy of two or more metal elements. In many instances, it is desired to form a metal into electrical connection with a crystalline silicon substrate, for example conductively doped crystalline silicon. However, the physical contact of an elemental

metal with a crystalline silicon substrate inherently creates undesired excessive electrical resistance between the two materials.

[0003] One common way of reducing this resistance is to form an interfacing silicide region at the junction or interface of the metal with the silicon. Thereby, a silicon-silicide-metal interfacing electrical connection is formed. One manner of forming the silicide is merely by heating the substrate with the two contacting layers to a suitably high temperature for a sufficient period of time, typically in an inert atmosphere, to cause a reaction of metal and silicon to form the metal silicide. However in some instances, it might be problematic or at least undesirable to expose the substrate to the minimum temperature at which the silicide will form.

[0004] Further, integrated circuitry fabrication continues to strive to make ever denser and smaller electronic devices of the circuitry. One place where silicide contact structures are utilized is in the electrical connection of source/drain diffusion regions of field effect transistors with overlying conductive metal lines. As the device components get smaller and denser, it is highly desirable to precisely control the amount of silicide which is formed in such contacts, as well as in other devices where silicide interfaces between metal and silicon are desired to be formed. This is at least in part due to thermal energy required to drive the silicidation reaction, which can lead to thickness variation of the silicide formed over different areas of the

substrate and to undesired silicide roughness which can cause shorts in the finished circuitry.

[0005] For example in some instances in present-generation processing, it is desirable to fabricate the silicide regions over the substrates to have thicknesses of from 50 Angstroms to 100 Angstroms. Further, it is expected that the thickness of silicide regions in later-generation processing will fall below 50 Angstroms. Regardless, the variation in thickness of silicide regions formed over a substrate using typical prior art processing has been found to be anywhere from 20 Angstroms to 25 Angstroms across the substrate. This variability is undesirable and constitutes a 20% to 25% thickness variation for desired 100 Angstroms thick silicide regions, and a 40% to 50% variation in thickness for desired 50 Angstroms thick silicide regions. It would be desirable to develop methods which enable tighter thickness control of silicide regions which are formed across a substrate, and particularly where the silicide regions being formed have thicknesses that are no greater than 100 Angstroms where the above problem particularly manifests.

[0006] While the invention was motivated in addressing the above issues, it is in no way so limited. The invention is only limited by the accompanying claims as literally worded, without interpretative or other limiting reference to the specification, and in accordance with the doctrine of equivalents.

SUMMARY

[0007] The invention comprises methods of forming a reaction product and methods of forming a conductive metal silicide by reaction of metal with silicon. In one implementation, a method of forming a reaction product includes providing a semiconductor substrate comprising a first material. A second material is formed over the first material. The first and second materials are of different compositions, and are proximate one another at an interface. The first and second materials as being proximate one another at the interface are capable of reacting with one another at some minimum reaction temperature when in an inert non-plasma atmosphere at a pressure. The interface is provided at a processing temperature which is at least 50°C below the minimum reaction temperature, and is provided at the pressure. With the interface at the processing temperature and at the pressure, the substrate is exposed to a plasma effective to impart a reaction of the first material with the second material to form a reaction product third material of the first and second materials over the first material.

[0008] In one implementation, a method of forming a conductive metal silicide by reaction of metal with silicon includes providing a semiconductor substrate comprising a first material, where the first material comprises silicon in elemental form. A second material is formed over the first material. The second material comprises at least one of an elemental metal or a metal compound rich in metal. The first and second materials are

received proximate one another at an interface. The first and second materials as being proximate one another at the interface are capable of reacting with one another at some minimum reaction temperature when in an inert non-plasma atmosphere at a pressure to form a metal silicide. The interface is provided at a processing temperature which is at least 50°C below the minimum reaction temperature and at the pressure. With the interface at the processing temperature and at the pressure, the substrate is exposed to a plasma effective to impart a reaction of the first material with the second material to form a metal silicide on the first material. The plasma is inert to reaction with both the silicon and the at least one of the elemental metal and the metal compound, and inert to deposition of material over the second material.

[0009] Other aspects and implementations are contemplated.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] Preferred embodiments of the invention are described below with reference to the following accompanying drawings.

[0011] Fig. 1 is a diagrammatic sectional view of a semiconductor wafer fragment in process in accordance with an aspect of the invention.

[0012] Fig. 2 is a view of the Fig. 1 fragment at a processing step subsequent to that shown by Fig. 1.

[0013] Fig. 3 is a diagrammatic sectional view of an alternate embodiment semiconductor wafer fragment in process in accordance with an aspect of the invention.

[0014] Fig. 4 is a view of the Fig. 3 fragment at a processing step subsequent to that shown by Fig. 4.

[0015] Fig. 5 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0016] Fig. 6 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0017] Fig. 7 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0018] Fig. 8 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0019] Fig. 9 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0020] Fig. 10 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0021] Fig. 11 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0022] Fig. 12 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0023] Fig. 13 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0024] Fig. 14 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0025] Fig. 15 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0026] Fig. 16 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0027] Fig. 17 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

[0028] Fig. 18 is a diagrammatic equation of exemplary process aspects in accordance with a part of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0029] This disclosure of the invention is submitted in furtherance of the constitutional purposes of the U.S. Patent Laws "to promote the progress of science and useful arts" (Article 1, Section 8).

[0030] Exemplary preferred methods of forming reaction products, including conductive metal silicides by the reaction of metal with silicon, are described with reference to Figs. 1-18. Fig. 1 diagrammatically depicts a semiconductor substrate indicated generally with reference numeral 10. In the context of this document, the term "semiconductor substrate" or "semiconductive substrate" is defined to mean any construction comprising semiconductive material, including, but not limited to, bulk semiconductive materials such as a semiconductive wafer (either alone or in assemblies comprising other materials thereon), and semiconductive material layers (either alone or in assemblies comprising other materials). The term "substrate" refers to any supporting structure, including, but not limited to, the semiconductive substrates described above.

[0031] Semiconductor substrate 10 comprises some first material A having some second material B formed thereover. First material A and second material B are of different compositions and are received proximate one another at an interface 12. In the illustrated exemplary preferred embodiment of Fig. 1, first material A and second material B contact one

another at interface 12. Fig. 3 illustrates an alternate exemplary embodiment semiconductor substrate 10a. Like numerals from the first described embodiment are utilized where appropriate, with differences being indicated with the suffix "a" or with different numerals. Interface 12a of semiconductor substrate 10a in Fig. 3 is characterized by a layer or layers 14 interposed between first material A and second material B such that these materials are not contacting one another at interface 12a. Regardless, first material A and second material B as being proximate one another at interface 12/12a are capable of reacting with one another at some minimum reaction temperature when in an inert non-plasma atmosphere at some selected pressure. Accordingly, even where first material A and second material B are not contacting one another, conditions can exist where, at some minimum reaction temperature, one or both of materials A and B effectively diffuse through layer(s) 14 effective to impart a reaction of one with the other. In the context of this document, a material A being proximate a material B requires either a contacting relationship or separation of materials A and B from one another by one or more materials in an area of reaction wherein the separation distance is no greater than 50 Angstroms.

[0032] Interface 12/12a is provided at a processing temperature which is at least 50°C below the stated minimum reaction temperature. Further, the interface is also provided at the pressure referred to above at which the above-stated reacting can occur if at or above the minimum reaction

temperature at such pressure. Accordingly, the interface provided as just so stated does not result in the reaction of material A with material B at this point in the process. Preferably, the processing temperature at which the interface is provided is no greater than 300°C below such minimum reaction temperature, more preferably no greater than 100°C below the minimum reaction temperature, even more preferably no greater than 75°C below the minimum reaction temperature, and further preferably no greater than 60°C below the minimum reaction temperature. For example, titanium metal received on silicon has a minimum reaction temperature in the absence of plasma of 600°C at 10 Torr. In one exemplary aspect with these materials, the processing temperature is provided to be not greater than 550°C, in one embodiment from 300°C to 550°C, in one embodiment from 500°C to 550°C, in one embodiment from 525°C to 550°C, and in one embodiment from 540°C to 550°C, and at 10 Torr with no appreciable reaction occurring to form titanium silicide. The artisan knows or can readily determine the minimum reaction temperature at a given pressure in a non-plasma inert atmosphere for reaction capable first and second materials that are received proximate one another.

[0033] Referring to Figs. 2 and 4, and with interface 12/12a at the processing temperature and pressure, substrate 10/10a is exposed to a plasma effective to impart a reaction of first material A with second material B to form a reaction product third material AB of first material A and second material B over first material A. Plasma exposure can start prior to

the interface being at the minimum reaction temperature and at the pressure or start after the interface is already at the minimum reaction temperature and at the pressure. Regardless in such processing, all of material B might react to form AB, or only a portion thereof might so react thus forming a B-AB-A composite. Accordingly and regardless, a reaction of A and B to form AB is imparted at a temperature below which such would otherwise occur at the pressure the substrate is at. Therefore, second material B should not be too thick to preclude the stated reaction from occurring at interface 12/12a. In one exemplary preferred embodiment, it is expected that second material B should thereby be formed to a thickness no greater than 75 Angstroms, and more preferably to a thickness no greater than 25 Angstroms. However, such is expected to be dependent upon the plasma ion energy and plasma density utilized, and the density and other attributes of second material B. Regardless in one exemplary preferred embodiment, the plasma during the exposing has a density from 1×10^{11} ions/cm³ to 1×10^{13} ions/cm³. Further, the plasma exposing preferably comprises some substrate bias to facilitate the targeting of the plasma at the substrate. Preferably, the substrate bias is at a frequency of about 400 kHz or 13.56 MHz. Where a bias voltage is utilized, such is preferably no greater than 100V. An exemplary preferred pressure range for the processing is from 1 mTorr to 20 Torr, and with plasma power at from 100 Watts to 5000 Watts. Another method uses inductively coupled plasma to create the

plasma (separate from substrate bias) to get independent control of plasma ion energy and plasma ion density.

[0034] In one preferred implementation, the plasma to which the substrate is exposed is inert to reaction with both first material A and second material B, and inert to the deposition of any material over second material B. Exemplary inert plasmas are derived from a gas selected from the group consisting of He, Ar, Ne, Xe, Kr and mixtures thereof. A specific exemplary preferred example for Ti, and by way of example only, includes a plasma generated by inductively coupled plasma, 2000W for the inductive source power, a substrate bias of 200W, chamber pressure regulated to 10 mTorr, Ar flow at 100 sccm and a substrate temperature of 500°C, preferably producing a plasma density of from 1×10^{11} ions/cm³ to 1×10^{13} ions/cm³.

[0035] In one implementation, the exposing to plasma might be void of ion implantation, and in another might comprise ion implantation (by way of example only, plasma immersion ion implantation for example as described in En et al., "Plasma Immersion Ion Implantation Reactor Design Considerations For Oxide Charging", Surface and Coatings Technology 85 (1996) 64-69). Further in one preferred embodiment, the method of forming the reaction product is entirely void of any ion implantation at the interface.

[0036] In one embodiment, the plasma comprises some material which reacts with the second material to form a reaction product fourth material over the reaction product third material. Such is diagrammatically depicted in Fig. 16. There shown is a plasma comprising a material C which reacts with second material B to form a reaction product fourth material BC over reaction product third material AB. Regardless, the stated first, second, third and fourth materials may be any one or combination of insulative, conductive and semiconductive materials. For example and by way of examples only, each of the first and second materials might be conductive, with the third material being insulative. Alternately, each of the first and second materials could be conductive, with the third material being conductive. Alternately, each of the first and second materials could be insulative, with the third material being insulative. Alternately, each of the first and second materials could be insulative, with the third material being conductive. Alternately, one of the first and second materials could be insulative and the other of the first and second materials being conductive, with the third material being insulative. Alternately, one of the first and second materials could be insulative and the other of the first and second materials being conductive, with the third material being conductive. Alternately, one of the first and second materials could be conductive and the other of the first and second materials being semiconductive, with the third material being conductive. Alternately, one of the first and second

materials could be conductive and the other of the first and second materials being semiconductive, with the third material being insulative.

[0037] For example, Fig. 5 diagrammatically depicts a first material comprising titanium, a second material comprising aluminum, and a reaction product third material comprising TiAl_x . In this and all of the above and below examples, the stated first and second materials could of course be reversed, for example as depicted in Fig. 6 as compared to Fig. 5.

[0038] Fig. 7 depicts an example where the first and second materials are each conductive, and the third material is insulative. Here, one of the first and second materials comprises TiN and the other of the first and second materials comprises B, with the third material comprising BN.

[0039] By way of example only, Figs. 8 and 9 depict instances where the first and second materials are each insulative, and the third material is insulative. Fig. 8 depicts one of the first and second materials as comprising boron carbide, and the other of the first and second materials comprising SiO_2 , with the third material comprising B_2O_3 . Fig. 9 depicts one of the first and second materials comprising boron carbide, and the other of the first and second materials comprising Si_3N_4 , with the third material comprising BN.

[0040] Fig. 10 depicts an example where the first and second materials are each insulative, and the third material is conductive. In this example, one of the first and second materials comprises carbon (i.e., diamond, graphite, etc.) and the other of the first and second materials comprises SiO_2 , with the third material comprising SiC .

[0041] Fig. 11 depicts an example where one of the first and second materials is insulative and the other of the first and second materials is conductive, with the third material being conductive. Specifically, Fig. 11 shows one of the first and second materials comprising titanium and the other of the first and second materials comprising Si_3N_4 , with the third material comprising at least one of TiN or TiSi_x .

[0042] Fig. 12 shows a similar example, but where the third material is insulative. Specifically, one of the first and second materials comprises SiO_2 and the other of the first and second material comprises Ti , with the third material comprising TiO_2 .

[0043] Figs. 13 and 14 depict examples wherein at least one of the first and second materials is semiconductive, and including wherein the other of the first and second materials is conductive. Fig. 13 depicts the semiconductive materials comprising silicon, with the other of the first and second materials comprising titanium, and with the third material comprising TiSi_x . Fig. 14 depicts the semiconductive material comprising

silicon, the other of the first and second materials comprising titanium nitride, and with the third material comprising TiSi_x . Again with this and any of the examples stated herein, only some or all of the outermost layer might be consumed in the reaction.

[0044] Fig. 15 depicts an example where one of the first and second materials is semiconductive, the other of the first and second materials is conductive, and the third material is insulative. Specifically, there depicted is one of first and second materials comprising Si and the other of the first and second materials comprising RuO_2 , with the third material comprising SiO_2 .

[0045] By way of example only, Figs. 17 and 18 depict instances where the plasma comprises a material which reacts with the second material to form a reaction product fourth material over the reaction product third material. The specific depicted examples are relative to plasma material which comprises nitrogen, with such being depicted by N^* , although other reactive plasma materials are of course contemplated. Fig. 17 depicts the second material as comprising elemental titanium, the first material as comprising silicon, the third material as comprising titanium silicide, and the fourth material comprising titanium nitride. By way of example only, Fig. 18 depicts the first material comprising elemental titanium, the second material comprising silicon, the third material comprising TiSi_x , and the fourth material comprising silicon nitride.

[0046] In one exemplary preferred embodiment, the second material comprises at least one of elemental metal or a metal compound rich in metal. In one exemplary implementation, the second material consists essentially of one of these materials. Exemplary preferred materials include Co, Ta, Ti, W, Pt, Rh, Ru, silicides thereof, including mixtures thereof and including mixtures of silicides. In this particular example as with the others, the first and second materials as being proximate one another at an interface are capable of reacting with one another at some minimum reaction temperature when in an inert non-plasma atmosphere at a pressure to form a metal silicide. As above, the interface is provided at a processing temperature which is at least 50°C below the minimum reaction temperature and at the pressure. The substrate is exposed to a plasma effective to impart a reaction of the first material with the second material to form a metal silicide on the first material. Most preferably, the plasma is inert to reaction with both the silicon and the at least one of the elemental metal and the metal compound, as well as being inert to the deposition of any material over the second material. Other exemplary preferred attributes are as described above.

[0047] In this particular example, the preferred thickness range for the metal silicide which is formed on the first material is from 5 Angstroms to 100 Angstroms.

[0048] Processing as described in the above exemplary preferred embodiments can produce certain unexpected advantages and results. However, such advantages or results do not constitute part of the invention unless literally appearing in a particular claim under analysis. For example with respect to any silicide formation, the exposing and reaction can result in better control (less variation) in the thickness of the metal silicide formed by the reaction. Accordingly in one implementation, the exposing and reaction are effective to form all conductive metal silicide formed over the substrate by the reaction to have no more than 10% thickness variation as determined as the percentage of the thickness portion of the conductive metal silicide formed by the reaction. In another preferred implementation, such thickness variation is from 1% to 3%, and in another preferred embodiment to have no more than 1% of such thickness variation.

[0049] In compliance with the statute, the invention has been described in language more or less specific as to structural and methodical features. It is to be understood, however, that the invention is not limited to the specific features shown and described, since the means herein disclosed comprise preferred forms of putting the invention into effect. The invention is, therefore, claimed in any of its forms or modifications within the proper scope of the appended claims appropriately interpreted in accordance with the doctrine of equivalents.